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By JWF NARA Date 9/2/57

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to President

Analysis/Highlights of Secretary Kissinger's
Meeting with Chairman Mao, October 21, 1975

The Main Themes

This meeting was on the whole disturbing, signifying a cooling of our relationship linked to the Chinese perception of the US as a fading strategic power in the face of Soviet advance. Though the session was cordial, it was considerably less so than previous encounters. In November 1973 the conversation was described by the Chinese as "friendly," "wide-ranging," and "far-sighted." This time the third adjective was omitted. We both still have a "common opponent" but whereas before there was a feeling of working in parallel to counter this threat, this time the message was that the US could not be counted upon to resist pressures and therefore China was going to have to go it alone.

To sum up the major theme in one sentence: The US is "not reliable," Europe is "soft," Japan seeks "hegemony," and therefore China will dig tunnels, store millet and oppose the Soviet Union on its own, even as a naïve and appeasing world curses the Chinese as "warlords" for sounding the alarm.

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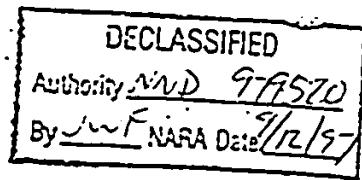
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The Soviet Union therefore is still the enemy. The US is not so much hostile as it is ineffectual (which perhaps is more insulting). For example, if Europe is attacked we would pull a Dunkirk and get out, rather than either seeing our heavily outnumbered troops get overwhelmed or resorting to nuclear weapons. If this is true in Europe, by extension it is true in Asia as well; China should not count on our defending it in a crunch; we need not discuss military matters as/previous occasions. In any event China is down the list of our priorities, and even our allies in Europe and Japan get less attention than the Soviet Union in our policies.

In our relations with Moscow the theme of appeasement (Teng used the Munich analogy) has overtaken the one of collusion. Detente is dangerous not so much because it represents ganging up on China as it undermines the morale and defenses of the West through false illusions, thus increasing the pressures on the PRC. It is true that we "stood on the shoulders" of China to gain leverage on Moscow in the 1971-3 period, but that is "useless" now -- presumably both because China won't let itself be used and because detente is in trouble. Thus our policy now is marked by maneuvering and Dr. Kissinger's very busy travels. We are flailing away in a rear guard action against the Soviet hegemonic tide which is sweeping toward war: we are "swallows" who are "busy" before "the wind and rain" come. We may be able to postpone the - - - - - but it is inescapably on its way.

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The source of our troubles is domestic. "Not reliable" can refer to a failure of nerve, a general withdrawal from the fray, the release of classified documents, the incomprehensible (to the Chinese) destruction of a strong President over a minor incident. Our policies are increasingly hamstrung by a combination of the liberal appeasing establishment symbolized by the New York Times, and traditional conservative isolationists (and anti-PRC to boot) symbolized by Senator Goldwater.

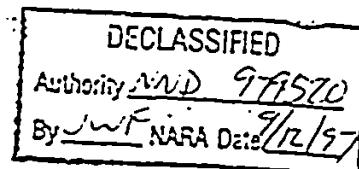
This turbulent international situation is much more crucial than Taiwan. For now it is better to have the US keep the island under control rather than having it go independent or toward Moscow or Tokyo. The Chinese can wait patiently until the time is ripe, but then they will have to use force. By implication, the US should not ask for peaceful assurances, but it can take its time letting Taiwan go.

The future of China's policies is uncertain. Mao and his followers -- Premier Chou, Marshall Yeh, and (noticeably) Vice Premier Teng -- are all old and "will not do," "will not make it out." There is criticism, perhaps internal, of Mao as being a "warlord" (too anti-Russian?) and a "bureaucrat" (too much emphasis on production?).

Thus China will go it alone - "rifles and millet." Let all the world curse it as a "warlord" or "warmonger." That only makes

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Mao happy. The Chinese will prepare for "the wind and the rain." And if Moscow attacks, Peking will suck the Russians in, let them occupy the big cities à la Napoleon, and mobilize for a victorious counter-attack.

Some Specific Points

Mao is very sick. He looked it, despite his mental agility. He was unable to walk us to the door as on previous occasions. He had much more trouble standing. He was just about unable to speak at all, making most of his points on paper or in obscure grunts. He is "going to heaven" soon, and has an "invitation from God" (points he has made previously, however). And he described his various ailments all over him.

Mao is in charge of general international strategy. He was well briefed and he had clearly given Teng his script the day before. He hit all the major themes of their foreign policy. On the other hand, he is clearly incapable of detailed or sustained work; he himself said that he ignored "routine" affairs and suggested he confined himself to international matters.

Teng is the key official now. Mao referred to him several times in the conversation. He is certainly Chou's replacement, and perhaps Mao's. On the other hand Mao pointed to his age, grouped him with himself, Chou and Yeh, and suggested that they would all be soon irrelevant.

The US (and Kissinger) are "not reliable." See the general

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themes above. We are "swallows" before the storm. We "maneuvering" and "busy" - though both are allowable, they are apparently at best delaying actions. We are prone to "Dunkirks." We won't use nuclear weapons. We are no longer "far-sighted."

Our domestic structure is weak. Watergate was mishandled and magnified. Our media (Times) and our Congress (Goldwater) are sapping our strength.

China is relatively backward -- both in strength and in our priorities. After America comes Russia, Europe, Japan and then China.

"Europe is too soft now." They are afraid of the Soviet Union. "Europe is too "scattered," "loose," "spread out." East and West Germany should unite under West German domination (so as to pressure the Soviet Union.)

"Japan is seeking hegemony."

US policy toward the Soviet Union is confused and ineffectual.

It is variously described as "Dunkirk" appeasement, frantic maneuvering, using China to get to Moscow, joining Moscow in hurling epithets at the PRC. At the same time Moscow remains a "common opponent" of both China and the US and when war breaks out, then (but only then) we should consider joint cooperation.

In any event Schlesinger should come to China and visit the areas near the Soviet Union (so as to push us towards confrontation with Moscow). He is presumably welcome because he makes preparations and cries out rather than flying around like a "swallow."

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"The small issue is Taiwan, the big issue is the world."

They can wait 100 years, for Taiwan is "unwantable," indigestible ("full of counter-revolutionaries"). It's better for the US to keep the island under control for the time being.

China will rely on itself. "Rifles and millet." The Dunkirk strategy if necessary. The Chairman likes to be cursed (unlike Americans who worry about their image?); only then does he pay attention to someone. Dr. Kissinger should go ahead and publicize Chinese aggression against China (Taiwan) and Korea. "I will only be happy when all foreigners slam on tables and curse me." China needs to know its enemies (including the US?) so as to be vigilant: "If you don't curse me, I won't see you, and I will just sleep peacefully."

Concluding Caveat

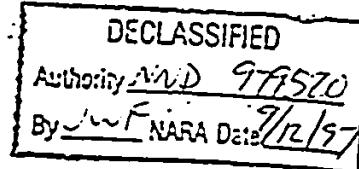
Finally, let us not pretend that we can fathom everything the Chairman had to say. Some passages might have had layers that we are incapable of sensing; others might merely be literal; others might be haphazard, even meaningless.

The Chairman's basic message and principal themes were clear. They clearly formed the strategic framework for the Kissinger visit, indeed for the evolution in our relations in the past couple of years. But there were several cryptic passages that are unclear. The tendency is to dig for the subtleties, the deeper meanings behind the Chairman's laconic, earthy prose. In most

others, however, there

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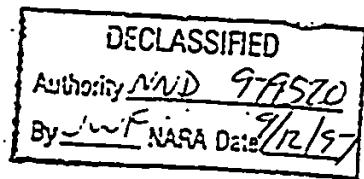


may be nothing particularly significant, or a somewhat senile man might have been wandering aimlessly for a moment. After all, he is a very frail 82. His words were either translated with great difficulty (and probably smoothed over and elaborated at times) by the three girls or written down. Chiao volunteered his own interpretation the next day, which is unprecedented, playing down the collusion theme and underlining the "common enemy" leverage.

To cite just one example of ambiguity: "Do you have any way to assist me in curing my present inability to speak clearly?" The odds are that this was basically small talk about his own health. It is very doubtful that he was seriously asking for medical assistance. But was the Chairman saying that his voice within China (or in the world) was not being heard, that his influence is being circumscribed, and that he wants US help to strengthen his position through our policies? Does he want us to help him "speak clearly" in this larger sense?

There were several other obscure passages in the talk, e.g. the reference to the anti-Chinese Korean resolution, the cracks against Jewish influence in the American media, the invitation to Bush to pay a call on the Chairman. These might have meant, in turn, that the Chinese don't want to get involved in the Korean problem; that Jews are traditionally appeasers in history and are a major element in eroding American steadfastness; and that the US should pay more attention to China.

Equally the passages may have had no deeper meaning whatsoever,



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despite the Chairman's well deserved reputation for the use of aphorism and symbolism and never wasting his words.